

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

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C O N F I D E N T I A L CARACAS 2421

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PEPR, MPOL, CU, VE
SUBJECT: CUBAN OUTREACH IN THE CARIBBEAN

REF: STATE 056727

1. THE CUBAN EMBASSY IN VENEZUELA HAS MAINTAINED AN
ACTIVIST POSTURE, PROMOTING A WIDE RANGE OF CULTURAL
AND SPORTS ACTIVITIES, IN ADDITION TO
ENCOURAGING TOURISM AND EXCURSIONS TO CUBA. THE
CUBAN EMBASSY ALSO MAINTAINS CONTACT WITH LEFTIST
POLITICAL PARTIES AND GROUPS, BUT CUBANS HAVE
REMAINED CAUTIOUS IN CONTACTS WITH VENEZUELAN LEFTISTS.

2. MOST PUBLIC ACTIVITIES HAVE BEEN SPONSORED BY
THE CUBAN-VENEZUELAN FRIENDSHIP INSTITUTE (IVCA). THE
INSTITUTE RECEIVES A \$5,000 MONTHLY SUBSIDY FROM THE
CUBAN EMBASSY FOR OPERATING EXPENSES, WHICH IS SUPPLEMENTED
BY A SMALL AMOUNT EARNED FROM THE SALE OF BOOKS, MAGAZINES
AND OTHER CUBAN LITERATURE. (LITERATURE IS NOT
SUPPLIED BY THE EMBASSY, BUT SHIPPED DIRECTLY TO IVCA).
FERNANDO MARQUEZ CAIROS, A VENEZUELAN, IS THE
PRESIDENT OF THE INSTITUTE OF PERMANENT STAFF OF
FIVE OR SIX IN ADDITION TO APPROXIMATELY 15 PART-TIME
STAFF. THIS NUMBER IS SUPPLEMENTED BY VOLUNTEERS WHO
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ASSIST WHEN SPECIAL PROGRAMS OR ACTIVITIES REQUIRE
ADDITIONAL MANPOWER. IVCA USES THE AERO TOUR AGENCY INTS FOR TRAVEL
ARRANGEMENTS OF VENEZUELAN VISITING
CUBA. AERO TOURS, WITH ITS CONTACTS IN HAVANA,
IS ABLE TO TAILOR SPECIAL TOURS AND ARRANGE CONTACTS
WITH CUBAN OFFICIALS FOR GROUPS TRAVELING TO CUBA.

3. THREE MAJOR ACTIVITIES HAVE BEEN SPONSORED BY IVCA:

(1) CULTURAL PROGRAMS WHICH INCLUDE MUSIC, DANCE GROUPS AND CINEMA FESTIVALS WHICH ARE GENERALLY PROGRAMMED FOR CARACAS AND THE LARGER CITIES IN VENEZUELA: (2) THE MORE POPULAR SPORTS EXCHANGES AND COMPETITIONS HAVE ALSO BEEN PROMOTED BY IVCA WITH MORE SUCCESS, THE LATEST BEING A RECENT BOXING COMPETITION BETWEEN CUBAN AND VENEZUELAN BOXERS IN CARACAS WHICH WAS CARRIED ON VENEZUELAN TELEVISION: (3) TOURISM AND EXCURSION GROUPS HAVE BEEN THE THIRD MAJOR PROMOTIONAL ACTIVITY CARRIED ON THROUGH IVCA. SOME 1200 VENEZUELAN ARE ESTIMATED TO HAVE VISITED CUBA IN 1977, A FIGURE APPROXIMATELY EQUAL TO THAT IN 1976. ALTHOUGH TARGETED TOWARD THE MORE RECEPTIVE UNIVERSITY AND LEFTIST POLITICAL MEMBERSHIP CLIENTELE, ATTENTION HAS ALSO BEEN GIVEN TO ENCOURAGING TOUR GROUPS OF TEACHERS AND OTHER PROFESSIONAL GROUPS. AN ESTIMATED THIRTY CUBANS TRAVEL TO VENEZUELA EACH MONTH, USUALLY IN SOME OFFICIAL OR SEMI-OFFICIAL DUTY (COURIERS, TECHNICAL AND ECONOMIC ADVISORS, MEMBERS OF EXCHANGE GROUPS TO GOV, ETC.).

4. NEW CUBAN ACTIVITIES OF NOTE IN THE LAST TWO MONTHS

HAVE BEEN SEVERAL PROPAGANDA MAIL-OUTS TO LARGE NUMBERS OF VENEZUELAN. THE CUBAN EMBASSY MAINTAINS ITS OWN MAILING LIST OF VENEZUELAN WHO RECEIVE LITERATURE

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FROM THE CUBAN MISSION, HOWEVER, RECENT BLANKET MAILINGS WERE DIRECTLY FROM HAVANA. MATERIALS MAILED BLASTED THE USG ON THE GUANTANAMO NAVAL BASE AND THE PUERTO RICAN INDEPENDENCE ISSUE. THIS TYPE OF PROPAGANDA, I.E., DIRECT MAIL FROM HAVANA, HAS PREVIOUSLY BEEN DONE BY THE CUBANS, BUT NEVER IN SUCH VOLUME. ANOTHER ACTIVITY RECENTLY INITIATED BY THE EMBASSY HAS BEEN TO WOO MEMBERS OF THE CUBAN EXILE COMMUNITY, SPECIFICALLY THOSE WITH NO STRONG IDEOLOGICAL BIAS AGAINST POST-REVOLUTIONARY CUBA, AND ENCOURAGE THEM TO VISIT CUBA TO WITNESS CHANGES THE CUBAN REVOLUTION HAS MADE.

5. COMMENT: CUBAN ACTIVITIES AND PROGRAMS IN VENEZUELA HAVE REGISTERED A MEASURABLE INCREASE IN THE COURSE OF THE LAST YEAR. HOWEVER, THIS SHOULD BE ATTRIBUTED MORE TO THE PERSISTENT AND SUCCESSFUL EFFORTS OF THE CUBAN EMBASSY TO GRADUALLY EXPAND THE CUBAN PRESENCE IN VENEZUELA. APART FROM THE RECENT MAIL-OUT OF PROPAGANDA MATERIAL FROM HAVANA, NO IDENTIFIABLE EFFORT TO MARKEDLY RAISE THE LEVEL OF CUBAN ACTIVITIES ON SPECIFIC ISSUES HAS BEEN DISCERNED. THE CONTINUOUS,

MODEST GROWTH IN ACTIVITIES IS DUE IN PART TO THE
LARGE CUBAN EXILE COMMUNITY IN VENEZUELA, AND THE
PRESENCE OF AN ACTIVE NUMBER OF ANTI-CASTRO MILITANTS
WITHIN THE EXILE COMMUNITY WHICH HAS SERVED AS A
BRAKE ON CUBAN ACTIVITY. THE IMPRISONMENT OF ANTI CASTRO CUBAN
EXILE ORLANDO BOSCH IN A VENEZUELAN PRISON, CHARGED WITH THE
OCTOBER 1976 BOMBING OF A CUBAN AIRLINER HAS PLACED
AN ADDITIONAL STRAIN ON CUBAN-VENEZUELAN RELATIONS
AND GIVES ADDED CAUSE FOR THE GOV TO PREVENT THE PUBLIC
CUBAN PRESENCE FROM BECOMING TOO APPARENT. ALTHOUGH
DIPLOMATIC TIES WERE RE-ESTABLISHED FOUR YEARS AGO,
RELATIONS WITH CUBA ARE STILL VIEWED WITH RESERVATION
ON THE PART OF SOME GOV OFFICIALS AND WITH HOSTILITY
AND SUSPICION BY THE VENEZUELAN ARMED FORCES AND SECURITY
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SERVICES IN PARTICULAR. FOR THESE REASONS, THE
CUBANS HAVE THUS FAR BEEN CONTENT TO CONFINE
THEIR ACTIVITIES TO CULTURAL AND SPORTS ACTIVITIES,
AND TOURIST PROMOTION, WHILE MAINTAINING A LOW PUBLIC
PROFILE.
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